100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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Since the beginning in 1884, the cover of *The Auk* had featured a single Great Auk (*Pinguinus impennis*) facing right, with five others in the distance on a rocky coast. In 1912, Louis Agassiz Fuertes was given the task of designing a new cover, which first appeared on the January 1913 issue. Editor Witmer Stone suggested that for depicting bird life, Fuertes was a much better artist than had existed 30 years before and so could make "a far closer approximation to the actual appearance of the famous bird." His new cover depicted a gathering of about 40 Great Auks on Funk Island off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, with a prominent single bird facing right. Apparently this new cover was not met with much enthusiasm, and the Council formed a new committee in 1914 to help depict an auk more like that on the original cover. Fuertes was persuaded to redo the cover for the first issue of 1915, showing a single bird facing left on a rocky coast with eight birds in the distance. This cover lasted over 60 years, until new editor John Wiens decided to put the table of contents on the front cover in 1978, relegating the single Great Auk sitting on a rock to the upper right-hand corner of the cover, facing left. Twenty years later, editor Thomas Martin introduced the color cover with original artwork, with the auk still in the upper right-hand corner. The table of contents was moved to the back cover, with the auk in the upper right-hand corner. Ten years after that, *The Auk* switched to a larger format and the auk was moved to the upper left-hand corner of the cover, facing right (with the exception of the July 2008 issue, where it is facing left as on the back cover).

It was reported that the Linnaean Society of New York held its first annual dinner at the Hotel Endicott on 17 December 1912. The guest of honor was Frank M. Chapman, who received the Linnaean medal for his "unremitting efforts in stimulating interest in bird study." It was also stated that "The unqualified success of this first annual dinner of the Linnaean leads to the hope that it will become a permanent feature of the Society's active season." The second annual dinner was held in March of 1914, honoring the famous Daniel Giraud Elliot (1835–1915), a founding member of the AOU and its second president. These dinners continue today in the second week of March. Starting in 1983, the society has awarded the Eisenmann Medal for ornithological excellence and encouragement of amateur efforts in ornithology and birding at these dinners. The award honors the memorial of Eugene "Gene" Eisenmann (1906–1981), a stalwart of both the Linnaean Society and the AOU. A lawyer by trade, Gene was considered an authority on Neotropical ornithology and served as editor of *The Auk* from 1958 to 1959. Noted author and birder Kenn Kaufmann (born in 1954) was awarded the medal at the 2013 dinner.

It was also reported that the Wilson Club was contemplating becoming an ornithological society and holding annual meetings, which Editor Stone (presumably) thought was a great idea. The editorial in the *Wilson Bulletin* also suggested that the Cooper Club would cover the western United States, the Wilson Club the interior, and the AOU the east. Stone took exception to that suggestion, stating that it "does not seem to us a very happy one." He suggested that the Nuttall and the Delaware Valley clubs should represent the eastern part and that the AOU covered all three regions.

A number of expeditions were underway during 1912 and 1913. Wilfred H. Osgood of the Field Museum returned from a 9-month trip in South America, where he visited the west coast of Peru, the high Andes, and the headwaters of the Amazon, bringing back over 2,000 specimens of birds and mammals. In December of 1912, John C. Phillips and Glover M. Allen arrived in Egypt, were met with a camel caravan in Khartoum, and planned to spend several months for the Museum of Comparative Zoology near the borders of the Sudan and western Abyssinia. Under the auspices of the Carnegie Museum, W. E. Clyde Todd left Pittsburg on 15 May 1912 to explore James Bay. After taking the train as far as possible, they canoed to the island of Moose Factory on the south shore of the bay, where they were able to rent a boat to investigate the bay for the summer. "Unusual" weather precluded going as far north as they had planned, but they did obtain specimens of birds and mammals and collected much data on distributions and migration. They returned to Pittsburg on 16 November. Chapman and Fuertes sailed on 8 January 1913 to continue their work in Colombia. They expected to collect around Bogotá and cross the mountains into the Orinoco drainage, complementing the previous work they had done in western Colombia. They returned in May with about 500 specimens collected in 45 days of field work. The American Museum of Natural History had several collectors active in northern South America during 1911 and 1912, so the announcement that Colonel Theodore Roosevelt would lead an expedition to southern South America in December of 1913 was met with much anticipation. Along with his son, Kermit, and famous Brazilian explorer Cândido Rondon (1865–1958), Roosevelt would be the first to explore the River of Doubt in the Brazilian Amazon (Millard 2005).

In a letter to the editor (30:154–157), W. L. McAtee argued that the use of strychnine to kill sapsuckers, as recommended by the Biological Survey, was the only valid method to control these birds. The Survey had done a study and discovered that the damage done by sapsuckers was "very great" (McAtee 1911), particularly to fruit and ornamental trees. McAtee argued that poisoning

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was better than shooting, because it would kill those individuals causing the damage. He feared that a recommendation to shoot the birds would cause the slaughter of other innocent woodpecker species. However, others had argued that poisoning sapsucker drillings would also kill hummingbirds that visited the drillings for sap. McAtee ended his letter by stating that "in the scientific study of economic values, utilitarianism must prevail, and the rule of the greatest good to the greatest number be uncompromisingly applied."

A report by A. C. Bent on his progress on "Life Histories of North American Birds" was summarized by the editor (30:161–164). Bent had spent the previous 20 years visiting places in North America, collecting information, photographs, and specimens, primarily on breeding habits of birds. He had devoted considerable effort to amass a bibliography on North American birds but needed help finding more sources. Having realized that it was impracticable for one person to keep in touch with all sources in North America, he had enlisted the help of 20 collaborators, but they were having trouble with water birds. Bent contended that as a group, they were the "most inaccessible and least interesting" to many ornithologists. Also, there were problems of procrastination and lack of time by contributors, and many useful data were buried in the field notes of many observers. Nonetheless, Bent thanked everyone who had been helpful so far and hoped that "American ornithologists will show their interest in the work by cooperating to make it successful."

Apparently a conundrum of the day was how to report bird songs (30:472–474):

> The study of bird songs is a department of ornithology that has failed to receive the attention that it deserves or at least has failed to advance along true scientific lines. This may be due in part to the rather surprising attitude of most leading ornithologists toward the method employed in recording bird song, i. e., the musical notation. One ornithologist says "Musical notation might as well be Greek so far as it gives an adequate idea of song to any other than the transcriber," and another while admitting the difference in tone quality between notes sung by a bird and notes played on a piano, fails to realize the mechanical nature of the piano scale and cites his inability to recognize songs played on the piano from records made in musical notation by one of the leading students of bird song, as indicating the failure of this method. Of forty-one songs played by the pianist "thirty-three conveyed absolutely no impression, we could not even guess at their identity."

According to the author, there were two reasons to record bird songs: so that someone else can recognize the bird song, and to make an accurate record of the song to compare with other recordings. The first was thought to be really unattainable on the printed page. One had to actually hear a bird sing before one would know the "accent, speed, and quality" of the song. The second reason presented even more difficulty, whether the method used was musical or syllabic or a combination of both. Some syllabic representations were pretty good, such as for the whip-poor-will, while others "are almost ridiculous." The author believed that the scientific study of bird songs was going to be exciting and that the questions to be answered were "innumerable." Do mockingbirds really mimic other species? Do birds of one species in an area sing for harmony or is it an inherited characteristic? Do birds have an appreciation for music? In the end, "bird song is music and in its scientific study must be measured by musical standards."

The complaints about musical notation sound similar to those voiced with the introduction of sonograms in the 1960s, primarily because of the bird identification guide written by Chan Robbins, Bertel Bruun, and Herbert Spencer Zim (Beaver 1974). But they were no trouble if you could whistle a sonogram, like Louis Baptista.—Kimberly G. Smith, *Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, USA; E-mail: kgsmith@uark.edu*

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